



## News Advisory

**For Immediate Release**

August 26, 2008

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### **Disfigured Baseball Star to Warn Horizonte Students Against Smokeless Tobacco Use**

**WHO:** Former Illinois high school baseball star and cancer survivor Gruen Von Behrens is an educator with the National Spit Tobacco Education Program.

**WHAT:** Von Behrens is traveling across Utah to tell youth not to chew tobacco.

**WHY:** Von Behrens found out about the ugly effects of tobacco the hard way. At age 13, Von Behrens was a rising star with a batting average of .400 who dreamed of playing for the Chicago Cubs. Instead, at age 17, doctors discovered Von Behrens had advanced oral cancer. Within a week of the diagnosis, surgeons removed most of the lower half of his face. Thanks to smokeless tobacco, he has spent much of his life in hospitals, endured more than 40 surgeries and countless other treatments. Von Behrens' face has inspired thousands of kids *not* to dip into a can of chew.

**HOW:** The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and the anti-tobacco program The TRUTH are bringing Von Behrens to Utah to show youth why using tobacco can destroy your body and change your life. Von Behrens will challenge Utah students to enter Real Noise, an annual UDOH contest that invites junior, middle and high school students and their friends to create and conduct anti-tobacco activities in their communities. Entries are due by November 21. More information is available at [www.fighttheugly.com](http://www.fighttheugly.com).

**WHERE/WHEN:** Thursday, August 28

9:15 a.m.

Horizonte Instruction and Training Center

1234 S Main Street, Salt Lake City

Room 540

**MEDIA NOTE:** In Utah, 7 percent of male high school students use smokeless tobacco, which contains 28 carcinogens. Its use can lead to gum and heart disease and cancer of the esophagus, pharynx, larynx, stomach, and pancreas. Users receive four times more nicotine, the addictive chemical found in tobacco products, from smokeless tobacco than they would from smoking a cigarette.

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